

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/400,833
Reply to Office Action of May 29, 2003

REMARKS

Claims 2, 3, 19 and 20 are pending in this application. Claims 2, 3 and 19 are amended and claim 20 is added in order to more particularly point out, and distinctly claim the subject matter to which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claim 1 is canceled and claim 20 is added. The basis of the amendment is found in the canceled claim 1.

Claim Rejections - 35USC102

Claims 1-3 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Stefano et al. (U.S. 5,765,984).

The outstanding Office Action mailed on May 29, 2003 alleges that Stefano et al. disclose the invention and includes a movement means 62, a workpiece-machining device 20, a workpiece-storage device 34, a gripping means 66, a product-housing section 48, a material housing section 46, a skeleton-housing section, a first direction Y and a second direction X.

However, Stefano et al. disclose the product housing section and material housing section arranged in the perpendicular direction, that is, they are located up and down. In such an arrangement, the movement in the X direction is necessary to take a piece from the material-housing

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/400,833
Reply to Office Action of May 29, 2003

section 46. The present invention is distinct from Stefano et al. at least in that the product-housing section is located parallel to the material-housing section, and both of the product-housing section and the material-housing section are arranged in the second horizontal direction. Therefore, the operation time required by the present invention is much faster than that of Stefano et al. Thus, the features recited in claim 20 are unsupported by Stefano et al.

In addition, the gripper 32 disclosed in Stefano et al. moves along the axis Y and the piece-holding table 26 is separately moved along the axis X. During the movement of the piece 30 along the axis Y, the piece-holding table 26 remains stationary. See col. 3, lines 13-20. That is, the gripper 32 disclosed in Stefano et al. moves only in the Y direction, corresponding to the first horizontal direction of the present invention. Even if the gripper 32 and the piece-holding table 26 form a gripping means in Stefano et al., the gripping means cannot be moved simultaneously in the directions of X and Y. On the other hand, the rectangular coordinate movement means of the present invention moves the traveling body 27 even simultaneously in the first horizontal direction and in the second horizontal direction. Thus, the features recited in claim 20 are unsupported by Stefano et al.

Claims 2, 3, 19 and 20 are believed to be allowable over the art and early allowance of the same is respectfully requested.

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/400,833
Reply to Office Action of May 29, 2003

If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

ARMSTRONG, WESTERMAN & HATTORI, LLP



Stephen G. Adriah
Attorney for Applicant
Reg. No. 32,878

SGA/SY/mt
Atty. Docket No. 991059
Suite 1000
1725 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-2930



23850

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE